

a woman's revolution? The Black Panthers can't be our paid mercenaries — we have to liberate ourselves and fight in our own cause.

Why not admit it, the purpose of that campaign was to prove to the Black Panthers that we in Women's Liberation aren't racists. As if we could ever prove it, because we are racists by definition. And there they've got us — we will always be giving money, proving our worth, sewing shirts for soldiers, until we stop taking this bullshit and organize a revolutionary women's movement.

The Socialist Worker's Party

The Socialist Worker's Party is highly attractive to male-oriented women who have swallowed the line that a socialist revolution will automatically bring about the liberation of women. Any careful examination of the status of women in nations that have already gone socialist will give the lie to this pleasant fantasy. In such nations, women's roles are defined by men, and restrictions on political activity make it much more difficult for women to achieve liberation. When the Party decides that an increase in population is desirable, heroic mother medals are awarded. When women are needed in the factories, heroic working-woman medals are minted. When women are needed to nurse soldiers, as in the USSR after the Second World War, the medical profession is opened to them — at least on the lower levels.

The Socialist Worker's Party, whose membership is 75% male and whose leadership is almost entirely male, has moved with frightening success to infiltrate and take over

Male Orientation in Women's Groups

This subversion and co-optation of the women's movement by the male-oriented left would not be possible if so many women were not male-oriented, and if the left were not so full of liberal tendencies. Women have a difficult time in getting rid of the need for male approval, particularly straight women. They find it almost impossible to put their own needs first, tending to act as if women's needs are trivial. This is compounded by a tendency to see men as simultaneously strong and weak — too strong for poor weak women to successfully fight them, and too weak in their dear little egos for us to criticize them in any way.

Since men are always getting into fights, and since they present every situation as a life-or-death crisis (or carefully engineer such a crisis), for us to take time out to criticize them or demand that they change their behavior is pure sabotage. They haven't got the time for trivial gabble about women's problems. Our job is to relate to their struggles.

For example, women took over a male-dominated newspaper — RAT — and have been running it for eight months. A look at a recent issue (as of this writing) is an example of the continuing inability of some women to relate to their own needs. It is my impression, having worked on RAT, that while many of the women on it are happy working with other women on a paper where they are allowed to run it themselves, they can't get it together enough to publish something which isn't basically a report on the doings of the male movement.

No successful male revolutionary has felt it incumbent upon him to refrain from criticism of other left-wing groups whose principles or actions seemed contrary to the interests of oppressed people.

The fear to criticize other left-wing groups results in wishy-washy, vague politics, and an uncritical acceptance of behavior which can be actually counter-revolutionary. It destroys any attempt to organize a movement around sound ideological principles, permits oppression to flourish within the movement, alienates potential converts, and saps the spirit of women who would otherwise be willing workers for our liberation.

This fear, at least among whites, springs out of guilt politics and a martyr-like attitude, an attitude which says that if you haven't been hit by a billy club or killed a cop or bombed a building, you're not good enough.

If you're white, your ideas are useless, and the best thing you can do with your life is to sacrifice it in the struggle to destroy honky culture and allow the emergence of a black nation. This idea was presented to me and passionately defended by a sister who is now underground. Another white sister informed me that as a white person, I am necessarily a racist (I agree to that definition), and that I am like all other white people including her. We all hate non-white people to the extent that we will all commit any atrocity whatsoever in order to defend our white skin privileges, including torture and genocide. As a working class lesbian one generation removed from Dachau, I find such politics unspeakably funny. I could die laughing.

What is a Revolutionary?

We seem to confuse people who are fighting simply to end their own oppression — regardless of what happens to other people — with genuine revolutionaries.

I believe that the true revolutionary is a person working, in whatever capacity — as a soldier or a distributor of leaflets or a worker in a day care center — to end all forms of oppression. She (he) does not fear criticism from comrades, because she recognizes the limitations of her own experience and wishes to broaden her understanding of all forms of oppression in order to struggle more successfully against them.

She struggles for understanding and pays attention to an idea rather than to the source of the idea. An idea is not correct simply because it issues from the mouth of Mao or Che or any other leader.

A person is not automatically defined as a revolutionary simply because she is poor, female, black, or a member of any other group by the circumstances of her birth. She is

defined by her conduct, by the manner in which she relates to people. If she demonstrates a willingness to liberate her own group while attempting to oppress other groups, or if she judges a person's politics by the circumstances of their birth or occupation, she is simply engaged in a struggle for power for her own faction, not engaged in revolution.

At the present time, almost all males are only too willing to oppress women while they issue a few patronizing statements about women's liberation. They have no standard of humanity — only a standard of manhood, and that standard is the cock and the gun. They show almost no willingness to deal with their own sexism or their own liberalism towards so-called radicals who practice sexism, that is, who oppress women and gay men. Nor are they particularly interested in examining the autocratic structures of their own groups and the ways in which they oppress each other.

It is obviously necessary — has always been necessary — for there to be a strong, separate women's movement whose members are dedicated to struggle for their own liberation and the liberation of all people; women who will band together in strength and not run too quickly to form alliances with oppressive men; women with self-respect who will not be diverted into being female auxiliaries and fund-raising organizations for male power structures.

It is necessary for such a movement to have a principled, coherent ideology, and to cast out of its ranks opportunists who are seeking approval and favors from the Establishment, as well as women who are willing to sell themselves short in order to gain radical credentials with male groups. It is necessary for such a movement to have within it skilled political economists, because the United States is in an economic situation unlike any other nation past or present, and this is not the place for a revolution modeled after those which have occurred in agrarian societies. We have a lot to figure out before we can move intelligently.

Since women have been oppressed longer than any other group in history, men have a very heavy investment in continuing to oppress us. Their very sense of "manhood" is defined by their continuing to oppress us. As a result, such a movement will be attacked viciously from both the right and the left, and attempts at subversion will continue. Our only hope will be a clear understanding of what must be done in order to make a woman's revolution.

We must have control of all the avenues of power in accordance with our numbers — that means 51% control of everything! All power to the sisters! Forward to the World-Wide Women's Revolution!

subversion in the woman's movement

Martha Shelley

sections of the women's movement. They have moved full-time workers into the women's centers of New York, Boston, Baltimore and Los Angeles, attempting to take over jobs, moving in SWP literature and moving out feminist literature. Check it out sister, if you live in these cities.

The SWP has a policy of infiltration, which is described in their handbook — a handbook issued only to loyal party members. I am attempting to get hold of this handbook, which was described to me by a disillusioned ex-SWP woman, and will publish it as soon as possible.

The SWP is also backing the Equal Rights Amendment, a deceptive piece of legislation which will strip away protections from working women. So this is a Socialist Worker's Party?

At the Women's Strike in New York, control of the speakers platform was in the hands of Ruthann Miller, a long-time member of the SWP. A lesbian, who was attempting to tell her sisters in Bryant Park about the pig harassment coming down on gay women in the streets, had to get permission to speak from Ruthann — since the Socialist Worker's Party has a long term policy of expelling gay people from its membership, our gay sister found this a humiliating experience.

SWP has considered gay people to be counter-revolutionaries and a "danger" to the party. Seems like it's bad enough to be called a Commie without being called a Commie Pinko Queer to boot. Some of the expelled gay people are now in Gay Liberation Front; and sadly enough, some of them are wistfully trying to get SWP to change its mind and readmit them now that they have proved they can be "revolutionary." Maybe Huey's seal of approval will cause the SWP to have a change of heart.

It's difficult to place one's faith in a so-called vanguard — whether it's a black vanguard or a white vanguard — when the members can't think for themselves, when they can't even notice your oppression until it is spelled out in blood on the streets and cleared by the Central Committee.

The front and rear cover of the issue are pictures of two women who are guerilla warriors in male-dominated movements, Angela Davis and Leila Khaled. Nothing new about that — women fighting for male causes goes back as far as Judith, who in the Old Testament, entered the camp of the enemy (some other Semitic tribe) and slew their general in his sleep. As I recollect, that didn't do much to liberate Jewish women.

A great deal of coverage is expended on the Panthers and on the "Revolutionary People's Constitutional Convention", with no mention of the way women were fucked over at that convention. The *right on* to the Panthers is automatic by now. The Women's Strike of August 26 is covered without any attempt to distinguish between liberal and radical politics, without any attempt to take a feminist stance against the cooptation by various socialist groups as well as various establishment groups. A great deal of coverage consists of a *right on* to bombings, rip-offs, various forms of violence, without any analysis of what constitutes random violence and what constitutes revolutionary violent action.

The following issue contains a lengthy article on Korea. For some months now, the Panther Party has been extolling Kim Il Sung and the Korean Communist Party. I'm glad to see that RAT has finally caught up. The RAT interviewer asked the people who visited Korea what happens to homosexuals over there. *Who knows? That doesn't relate to Korea or the Korean culture. There are no homosexuals in Korea. Anyway, why should anyone want to embarrass the Koreans by asking such a question? What straight person would think to ask? They might think I was queer...*

Liberalism on the Left

The unwillingness of left-wing groups, particularly women's groups, to engage in criticism and analysis of political groups and events stems from a kind of liberalism which says that anything left-wing is good, and that public criticism of a left-wing group can only do harm to the movement.

GLF WOMEN

GLF women welcome all women. In meetings and activities we maintain a flexible way of doing things to encompass our sisters of different social, economic, racial, religious, and political interests, and to permit individual freedom in actions and activities, both inside and outside of GLF.

We provide an opportunity for women to relate to other women — through political activities and community social activities, beginning with dances and moving out to new forms of socializing and communicating with our sisters.

Gay Liberation Front was the first group in New York to come together specifically to fight homosexual oppression. GLF Women, a caucus of GLF, are lesbian activists fighting oppression on two fronts: As homosexuals, we work with our gay brothers to fight oppression based on society's exclusion of individuals who love members of the same sex. As women, we work with Women's Liberation to fight the oppression of all women.

Our strongest common denominator and greatest oppression lies with society's injustice against us as homosexuals. We are discriminated against as women, but lesbians who live openly are fired from jobs, expelled from schools, banished from their homes, and even beaten. Lesbians who hide and escape open hostility, suffer equal oppression through psychic damage caused by their fear and guilt. With this understanding, we focus on Gay Liberation, giving priority to gay issues and gay problems. We are part of the revolution of all oppressed people, but we cannot allow the lesbians issue to be an afterthought.

GLF Women are dedicated to changing attitudes, institutions, and laws that oppress lesbians, using all or any methods from reform to revolution. Actions and consciousness-raising achieve this goal. Gay Liberation is a movement and a state of mind challenging history's basic legal and social assumptions about homosexuality. Openly proclaiming ourselves lesbians is a revolutionary act and a threat to the prevailing society, which excludes people who live outside the norm. We work for a common understanding among all people that lesbianism is the most complete and fulfilling relationship with another woman and a valid life style.

Gay consciousness-raising is a primary interest:

(1) So that our lesbian sisters understand our oppression and fight against it. To be effective the lesbian movement must be a grass roots effort. We denounce the fact that society's rewards and privileges are only given to us when we hide and split our identity. We encourage self-determination and will work for changes in the lesbian self-image, as well as in society, to permit the "coming out" of each gay woman into society as a lesbian. The new self-image or "gay consciousness" refers to our sense of pride, unity, life style and community.

(2) Raising consciousness of people in all movements, so that they become aware of their sexism.

(3) Raising the consciousness of our sisters active in Women's Liberation to openly acknowledge and actively support lesbians, with the attitude of solidarity and not reciprocity. We denounce the use of the word lesbian to divide us from our sisters who should be united with us in our common struggle for the liberation of all women. We feel that the core oppression of women is the lesbian's oppression and the ultimate liberation of women is through the liberation of lesbians. Real freedom for lesbians will mean the end of all oppressive relationships based on male dominance and the compulsion women feel to seek male approval and support.

Women's Liberation groups must undertake consciousness-raising on lesbianism. They must accept among their leadership admitted and publicly known lesbians. They must make explicit their acceptance of the lesbian life style now implicit in their analysis.

a) Feminists speak of rejecting role-playing, but fail to see the pressures in society during children's formative years to love men over women.

b) They say that women should be free to govern their own bodies, but fail to grant the freedom of sexual preference.

c) They denounce stereotyped male and female attitudes and characteristics, but fail to accept as natural the so-called masculine female and so-called feminine male.

d) They talk about being independent of men, but do not see that the lesbian life style is the ultimate form of independence.

e) They talk of love among women, but do not include physical expression of that love.

(4) Education of the public to recognize homosexuals as an oppressed minority and to destroy stereotyped images based on and perpetuated by society's hostility. To fight prejudice with reason and love. "Gay is Good." Sexuality is basic to all human beings, and homosexuality is as natural as heterosexuality. To teach children from the earliest years about homosexuality without bias. To effect change, we advocate an open media policy, with media defined as lectures, demonstrations, leaflets, consciousness-raising, dances, and rapping in bars, as well as the press.

GAY LIBERATION FRONT WOMEN MEET SUNDAYS, 6-8 P.M., BEFORE GLF GENERAL MEETING, Community Center, 300 Ninth Avenue, New York.

RADICAL LESBIANS 10.

The radical lesbian movement is growing and changing; coalescing would probably be the best word. Lesbians from Gay Liberation Front, Women's Liberation, the bars and the closets are beginning to get it together. Many women have been meeting informally, but regularly, for several months as a group, now called Radicalesbians.

It began during the dreary months of a dying winter. A nucleus of GLF women, with a growing woman's consciousness, began to feel the need for an all-woman's GLF dance. We had previously been working and attending the GLF dances which were overwhelmingly male. The oppressive ambience of a simulated gay men's bar...an overcrowded, dimly lit room, where packed together subway rush hour style, most human contact was limited to groping and dryfucking. Earlier attempts by both men and women at encouraging group dancing and space for conversation were nullified by the "pack 'em in" attitude of the GLF men running the dances. And there were so many men, that the women were lost to each other in a sea of spaced-out men. It was intolerable to most women, but we put up with it, hoping it would change. Finally, when it was obvious it was only getting worse as the weather grew warmer, we decided to have an all-women's dance. The first dance was so successful, it has been followed by several more. An environment of women rapping, drinking, dancing...relating with fluidity and grace, is beautiful. And most important, to plan and set up these dances we had to meet and work together...weekly meetings of GLF women became routine. This provided a fine opportunity to work collectively and get to know one another.

Simultaneously with this, something else was happening. Some GLF women together with independent women from the Women's Liberation Movement had formed a consciousness-raising group. Out of our meetings, two things developed: the writing of the paper, "Woman Identified Woman" and a plan to confront the upcoming Congress to Unite Women with the issue they had been avoiding for so long — Lesbianism (that ole lavender menace). The Lavender Menace action is history now...we stole the show and had an audience of 400 women relating to lesbianism as it affects the women's movement. This was followed up by two days of workshops attended by over 200 women.

Our resolutions (we hope) became part of the report of the conference. WOMEN'S LIBERATION IS A LESBIAN PLOT...WE ARE ALL LESBIANS!!!

But the aftermath of the Congress coup is not so well known. We called for consciousness raising groups and 50 interested women met our call. Four groups were set up, new women from the Congress action and Lavender Menace participating in each group. Many of the women in these groups were straight women who wanted to confront the issue of lesbianism and perhaps the lesbian in themselves. But a very large majority of these women turned out to be active lesbians, latent lesbians, closet lesbians, one-beautiful-experience lesbians, freaked-out lesbians, spaced-out lesbians... from the ranks of women's liberation, they responded.

After having related for months and years to the broader women's issues at the sacrifice of their own identity, these women were ready now to come out, to use their own energies to meet the needs of a lesbian community, and to see that the concepts of primary value and commitment between women, developed in the paper "Woman-Identified Woman," were dealt with by the women's liberation movement. These sisters started coming to our weekly GLF women meetings and as the word spread through the grapevine, more and more unaffiliated women began attending these meetings.

Finally, the various groups of women had so thoroughly merged that the name GLF women seemed inappropriate... it was obvious we were an independent, autonomous group and while some women in the group continued to relate to GLF, there were many from the ranks of Women's Liberation who felt that they could not affiliate with a male-dominated organization that was in large part sexist. We decided to drop the name GLF women (we recently chose the name Radicalesbians) and begin our own treasury to relate to the needs of our sisters. The money was taken from the GLF community center fund...that portion that had been contributed by the many women who had attended GLF dances...enough to fund our first independent dance.

So a movement of radical revolutionary gay women has organically coalesced; not artificially out of rhetorical political necessity, but through the natural flow of our experience and changes in consciousness...

The trip will probably be difficult but extremely rewarding. Our priorities differ. Some sisters feel themselves to be an arm of the Woman's Liberation Movement...feel that the struggle is between women and male supremacy, and experience their primary identity as women (with a difference). Others feel themselves to be in close affiliation with GLF, continue to relate to GLF and view the struggle primarily as one between homosexuals and heterosexuals. Still others see their position as unique...a struggle against sexism whatever its guise. Some women have not shaped or articulated their politics...they only know that they like to be together with their sisters and want to help. With these differences we have been meeting and working together, respecting if not always loving each other.

We hope our policy and ideology will assume the shape of our collective needs. We are against hierarchical structures because as women we have experienced firsthand that hierarchy is a fixed status system (those with power and privilege, i.e. men, assume leadership and use it to perpetuate their advantage). We want an organization that encourages growth and fluidity. Therefore, we do not have "leaders." We experiment with forms that promote the participation of everyone in decision-making and actions. Some of these are consensus (sense of the meeting) instead of the vote, the lot system of assigning responsibilities, and a preference for meeting and rapping with small groups of women, rather than speaking at them in auditoriums and lecture halls. The quality of our exchanges with women is more important to us than reaching large numbers with stale rhetoric. We believe that we must live by revolutionary forms while we struggle against sexism, racism, and imperialism; that part of the revolution is our anti-authoritarian life style; that the revolution is process not goal. Small action-oriented collectives seems to be the direction in which we are headed.

It is important to Radicalesbians that sisters in the N.Y. area join us in our struggle. Lesbians whose lives are a struggle against the straight patriarchal supremacy; women who desire revolutionary primary relationships with other women, relationships that offer strength, support and solidarity, are radical lesbians. Join us in the struggle to smash sexism.

GAY SISTERHOOD IS POWERFUL
Radicalesbians